

EDITORIAL NOTES.

"Our days would all be brighter,
Our deeds would all be whiter,
If we'd only stop and think.
"We would cease unrest to borrow,
We would banish worlds of sorrow,
If we'd only stop and think."

The present issue of the Nur Afshan will find the delegates of three Presbyteries in session at Ludhiana in order to constitute the Panjab Synod of the Presbyterian Church in India. Much prayer has been offered for an outpouring of God's Spirit upon the Presbytery of Ludhiana, the Synod of the Panjab and the Annual Meeting of the Mission, covering the time between Oct. 24th and Nov. 7th. On Oct. 20th the Rev. J. Pengwern Jones is expected to be present to tell us of the Great Revival in the Khasia Hills in Assam.

The *P. and O. Steamship, Persia*, sailing Oct. 28th will carry away from our shores, Miss Edith Brown M. D. of the North India Medical School at Ludhiana who goes home for a well-earned furlough. May she have a prosperous journey and be permitted to return ere long to her work in India.

Several new workers and some who return from their furloughs are expected soon. Two lady workers come to Ludhiana to strengthen the Ludhiana Zenana and Medical Mission. The Rev. Dr. C. B. Newton and the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Kelso are expected to arrive soon, accompanied by two new missionaries. The Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Andrews of the Woodstock Girl's High School and College for Europeans at Mussoorie are now on their way to India. Their journey has been delayed by the rush to India in connection with the coming of the Prince of Wales and the new Viceroy.

The following item illustrates the folly of those who rashly accept newspaper reports as to the marvellous discoveries of science. The *Indian Witness* remarks:—

"Once more a bubble has been punctured, or at least explained. The supposed case of spontaneous generation from the action of radium is said by Sir William Ramsay to be, probably, nothing more than the formation of helium gas, instead of 'living cells.' One who has not loaded up with mechanical and materialistic conceptions of Bible truth can afford to look on in complacence while scientists settle their differences and expose one another's blunders."

The Literature Committees appointed in accordance with the suggestion of the Madras Centennial Conference of

missionaries have begun to work. The Hindi Committee has been studying the question of reprinting the controversial tracts known as the Pariksha Series. Here is what the Makhzan says of their finding:

"We are glad to learn through a circular of Rev. T. S. Wynkoop, Convenor of the 'Christian Literature Committee, Hindi Language Area,' that this committee has decided to let what is known as the 'Pariksha Series,' live. It would be a bold man indeed who would vote to stop the circulation of this Series of tracts, especially as last year more than 27,000 of them were sold from the Tract Depot to missionaries and others who know their value. Only one other book had a larger sale than one of these series, and that is a book of Bhajans. Instead of cutting off any of the Pariksha Series, there ought to be two or three more. A visit to the Monkey and Cow-temples at Benares and the sight of the multitudes worshipping in them, many of them intelligent, if intelligence can be told by the face, ought to stir some of our young missionaries to follow the example of the authors of the Pariksha series and add to the number by showing how foolish and abominable and hateful to God is such worship. We quite agree with Mr. Ashcroft, who writes:—We trust the committee will remember that the fight with Hinduism on its baser side cannot be carried on with gloves, and that the ordinary village reader is not so thin-skinned as the.....who holds up his hands in horror when ever a spade is called a spade."

It is a great mistake to suppose that the "enlightened thought" of the handful of educated men in India, affects to any great extent the religious prejudices of the great mass of India's people, whether Hindu and Muhammadan.

The great mass stands practically where it stood forty years ago and for this mass the books and tracts written by our fathers find a useful sphere. Much of what is modern is addressed to new India and the rising generation of school boys. This is most important. It does not however, mean that the older writings are not needed.

The Language Committees are in a position to greatly aid the cause of literature if they will only work.

The following judgement of the High Court, Bombay marks one more step in the scale of progress. We quote from the *Bombay Guardian*.

"On January 2nd last a Hindu named Atme Deoli and his sister performed the *shaf* ceremony of one, Gokali, the daughter of the second named. This ceremony consists of garlanding a dagger and reciting certain incantations by the *blats*, the dagger being considered the husband of the girl. They were charged before Mr. D. M. Patwardhan, first class magistrate of Deogad with the disposal of Gokali,

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a minor girl, for immoral purposes. It was declared in the evidence that the girl was debarred by the ceremony from contracting a lawful marriage, and that she had become a *bhawin*, and had to perform temple service. The magistrate held that it was not proved that *bhawins* led immoral lives and therefore acquitted both the accused. The Government of Bombay appealed against this decision, and the case has just been disposed of in the High Court, Bombay. Their Lordships, Mr. Justice Russell and Mr. Justice Batty, reversed the order of acquittal, and sentenced both accused to six months rigorous imprisonment each.

WILL INDIA BECOME CHRISTIAN?

So many missions are engaged, such varied methods are employed, and such vast sums of money are expended on this one noble work of making India Christian, that it seems natural for a pessimist to raise this question when the Kingdom of God appears to him to make so little progress. We can assure such an one, however, from the facts of the case, that no doubts need be entertained on that score. Christianity in India is not at the present day what it was a few decades ago. The banner of the Cross is marching triumphantly on from end to end of the country, though slowly yet steadily. Forces, secular and religious, are at work that it is only a question of time that the mud walls of Bharatpur, which baffled the military genius of Alexander the Great and others after him, should at last yield to the mining operations of a British officer. Years ago thus did we write:—

"We need not fear the issue. If individual proselytes are few, we have the consolation of seeing that a large percentage of our young men are hearing the truth, and that to a very perceptible extent Christian standards of morality are rapidly becoming the standards of our educated countrymen: in a word that by means of Missionary Education—and to a great extent by means of English literature, and English civilization, which like everything English, are saturated with Christian principles—India is becoming Christianized, not in the sense that Indians have overtly embraced the religion of Christ, but in the sense that His teaching is filtering into their daily lives and modes of thinking."

To-day we repeat these very words with still greater confidence. Even as regards numbers, the last Census Report bears more eloquent testimony to fact than any words of ours can.

The question that should be raised, therefore, is not "Will India become Christian?" but will the Indian Christian community rise to the occasion, realise its awful responsibility in the matter, fight its battles against principalities and powers and claim at last its due share in the victory? Will it leave the carrying out of the marching orders of Christ the Lord, as the sole concern of other nations and their agents, keep looking on and criticise their operations, or will the community make it its own concern and deem no sacrifice too great for the glorious end to be achieved?

We know what England has already done to Christianize India and here is a paragraph taken from the *Methodist Recorder* which shows what that country is still cheerfully prepared to do in the near future, not merely for India alone but for many other parts of the world.

We hope Foreign Missions will have such support this year as they have never had in the whole history of Methodism. Our opportunities were never so great. We are splendidly represented on the foreign field, and it is hard to curb the zeal of our agents before whom God has set so many open doors. There is money enough in Methodism to double the Missionary income, and that is the object on which many hearts are fixed. The Church Missionary Society is setting up a glorious example, and if we can only follow it, every claim of the West Indies, and of India, China, Burma, Ceylon, West Africa, and the great regions of South Africa which are opening to us will be fully met. If the Missionary meetings in the autumn could be used to secure increased devotion to the spread of the Gospel in all the world, we should strengthen the hands of our workers in every part of the mission field and help on the victory of our Saviour.

Yet it is said that "nearly half the Protestant Christians in India to-day are the fruit of American Missions." Recently the Bishop of St. Albans said, "so far has America realized the need of winning India to Christ that a hundred years hence, if the last thirty years' proportion continue, India will owe its Christianity more to America than to Great Britain and Ireland combined." If so, how much less to the Christian Community of India whose children we are!

We need not grudge to give honour where honour is due, whether it be to America, Great Britain or Ireland or any other land; but friends, reflect for a moment what a reproach it will be to us if we fail to do our duty in winning India for Christ. When our Master confronts us what shall we say to Him? Shall we follow the unbecoming example of the man with one talent in the parable? Is our loyalty to the Galilean King so frail and delicate of plant that it begins to fade at the very sight of privations and difficulties ahead? A true patriot is one who not only wishes well for his country but puts forth every effort to secure what is best for it even at the risk of his own life, and what can there be better than the closest union with Christ which we can wish for and labour for India whose ills are so many and so vexing? So then, both on the higher ground of loyalty to our Master and on the lower ground of patriotism, it is the bounden duty of us all to do our utmost for the spreading of God's kingdom in this beloved country of ours.

We know that there are difficulties to face, privations to endure; but what is there worth having, worth achieving, without a conflict and without a cost? Let us then be up and doing.

First let us put on the whole armour of God ourselves, next set our houses in order, inspire our children with the thoughts of the glory of victories won for Christ, roll away the reproach already hurled at us by friend and foe,—that we are wanting in spirituality and if time is not ripe yet for organising fresh campaigns ourselves, let us join the mighty hosts of God that are advancing, render all the service we can and share at last the glory of offering the best of jewels, even our country, for the diadem of our Master. May God the Holy Ghost help us so to do!

The Christian Patriot

ASOKA.

The history of each country may not incorrectly be described as the history of the application of the national genius to the solution of the problems of national existence. This definition, though open to considerable criticism, suffices as a working definition. Viewed from the stand-point of the development of religious thought, early Indian History divides itself into the Brahmanic (also called pre-Buddhist), the Buddhist, and the post-Buddhist periods. The History of India in fact, till the eighth century A.D., centres round the conflict between Buddhism and Brahmanism.

A study therefore of Buddhism is essential to the proper understanding of the period.

The history of Buddhism is closely connected with the Mauryan Dynasty, whose greatest King was Asoka. A sketch of the life of this Emperor brings us in contact with Buddhism in the zenith of its power and in its pristine purity: it reveals the life and work of a singularly noble-minded monarch; and it typifies to a large extent, the civilisation and constitution of an early Indian Empire. The life of Asoka affords also valuable instance of the work that has yet to be done in the field of research before we can possess adequate and trustworthy materials for a comprehensive history of early India. Till 1902, when Mr. Vincent A. Smith embodied his researches into the political side of the Buddhist Era, an absolutely erroneous chronology of Asoka existed; and we had very little data on which to base our ideas of Buddhist civilisation. In his "Asoka," however, we have a very scholarly and complete survey of the life and times of the great Emperor; and this information is supplemented by a later volume by the same author, on "The Early History of India." It is from both these books that we shall borrow the information necessary to sketch the life of Asoka.

The Mauryan Dynasty to which Asoka belonged, and of which he was the third Emperor, came into being as the direct result of the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C., and the immediate break up of the vast Empire he had laboriously built up in his life-time. Its founder, Chandragupta, was a man of humble origin and low caste, but he possessed organising ability, military experience, and political skill. Expelling the foreigners under Seleucus, he quickly built up a strong fabric on the ruins of Maghada, then the premier kingdom of Northern India. After twenty-four years of iron rule, during which he firmly established his dynasty and created a highly organized system of Government, he was followed by his son Bindusara, and then in 272 B.C., by his famous grandson, Asoka.

When in 272 B.C. Asoka ascended the throne of the Mauryan Empire, he found that he was the monarch of a splendid political fabric. The empire then extended from sea to sea, and included the whole of India except the extreme south. It is certain, however, that his dominions extended as far as Madras. Chandragupta reigned from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian sea; Bindusara subjugated the Deccan; Asoka annexed Kalinga to the Empire. Asoka's Empire therefore comprised all India proper from the twelfth degree of latitude to the Himalayas, and included the valley of Nepal, the valley of Kashmir, the Swat valley and adjoining regions, the Yusuf Zai Country Afghanistan as far as the Hindu Kush, and Baluchistan. The southern boundary of the Mauryan Empire may be defined with a near approach to accuracy, as a line connecting Pondicherry on the East Coast with Cannanore on the West, or approximately at the 12th degree of North Latitude. This extent of the Mauryan Empire exceeds the area of British India excluding Burma.

To such a vast heritage did Asoka succeed in 272 B.C., when quite a young man. It was his good fortune to ascend the throne of Maghada when the memory of the great Chandragupta was still fresh in the minds of men; in vast internal resources, and the secure basis of its political institutions, the Empire was strong; surrounding kingdoms, mostly feudatories, feared its military strength and bowed obediently to its commands; and it was presided over by a succession of prudent and able monarchs. It was Asoka's work during his forty years' reign, not so much to extend the already great Empire, but to consolidate its existing institutions, to diffuse a beneficent and civilizing influence through the larger part of his dominions, and to introduce, perhaps for the first time in Indian History, a form of Government strict yet tempered with clemency. It is a mistake to suppose that Asoka was so absorbed in the task of disseminating Buddhist doctrines, as to be insensible to the duties of his position. On the contrary, he seems to have been a monarch of exceptional strength of character and of great penetration. "Asoka," writes Mr. Vincent Smith, "was a hard-working King, unwearied in business, ready to receive reports at any hour and any place, and yet dissatisfied with the outcome of his industry. 'I am never,' he laments, 'fully satisfied with my exertions and despatch of business.' Probably, he worked too hard, and would have effected still more if he had done less. But his ideal of duty was high, and, like the Stoic philosopher, he felt bound to obey the law of his nature, and to toil on, be the result success or failure."

"The character of Asoka must be deduced from his words. The edicts reveal Asoka as a man who sought to combine the piety of the monk with the wisdom of the King, and to make India the kingdom of righteousness as he conceived it, a theocracy without God, in which the Government should act the part of Providence and guide the people in the right way."

"Reverence, compassion, truthfulness, and sympathy were the virtues which he inculcated; irreverence, cruelty, falsehood, and intolerance—the vices which he condemned. The preacher was no mere sermon-writer. He was a man of affairs, skilled in the arts of peace and of war, the capable ruler of an immense Empire, a great man and a great king."

Asoka was a missionary-hearted monarch. To his endeavours to spread the Dhamma throughout Asia and (as some chroniclers say) even through Eastern Europe, Buddhism owes its extended influence. How much of the civilization of ancient India the missionaries carried with them in their apostolic journeys, is yet an open question; but the ruins of great cities in the interior of Cambodia and Siam; seem to show that at one time a distinctively Indian influence permeated the political and social life of the extreme south-east of Asia.

It is one of the great regrets of the antiquarian and the student that little or no trace remains of the magnificent Empire of Maghada and its highly organized civilization. Professor Rhys Davids has laboriously constructed from the materials at our disposal, a very interesting and scholarly account of the political and social structure of Asoka's times. This is to be found in "Buddhist India" (Story of the Nations Series), to which we would direct the reader's attention. It was the misfortune of Asoka to be the last strong Emperor of the Mauryan Dynasty. His death in 232 B.C. was the signal for the break-up of the Empire; and till about 165 B.C. all was chaos. But Asoka still remains a picturesque and commanding figure in the world's history.

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Maltbie D. Babcock.

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